



DEVAL L. PATRICK
GOVERNOR

TIMOTHY P. MURRAY
LT. GOVERNOR

KEVIN M. BURKE
SECRETARY

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety
Department of Fire Services
P.O. Box 1025 ~ State Road

Stow, Massachusetts 01775

(978) 567~3100 Fax: (978) 567~3121



STEPHEN D. COAN
STATE FIRE MARSHAL

THOMAS P. LEONARD
DEPUTY STATE FIRE MARSHAL

For immediate release: June 27, 2007
Contact: Jennifer Mieth (DFS), (978) 567-3381
Lorraine Carli, NFPA, (617) 984 7275

**State Fire Marshal and NFPA Urge the Public to
“Be Smart! Leave the Fireworks to the Pros”**

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan and National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) President James M. Shannon today hosted a press conference with members of the medical, fire and law enforcement communities to raise awareness of the dangers of fireworks. They were joined by the Shannon family of North Carolina who lost their son to a legal firework in their home state. These participants are working together to encourage the public to “Be smart! Leave the fireworks to the professionals,” and to enjoy a safe and happy July 4th holiday.

Coan said, “We hear the phrase ‘IED’ every day on the news today, and yet that is exactly what fireworks are – explosive devices.” He added, “Let’s keep explosives in the hands of professionals where they belong.”

James M. Shannon, President of the National Fire Protection Association said, “The willingness of Michael Shannon's family to share their experience is truly admirable and is leading parents to think twice about home-grown fireworks shows.”

First Person Account

In partnership with the Alliance to Stop Consumer Fireworks and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), the parents and sister of Michael Shannon are encouraging families to leave fireworks shows to the professionals. They are featured in a moving video being seen throughout the country, sharing their story (www.nfpa.org/fireworks)

“What we found is that there is no safe way to use consumer fireworks without a substantial risk,” says Robin Shannon, Michael’s mother, in the video.

Michael was killed when a legal consumer firework tipped over during a family July 4th celebration in 1991. The firework struck three-year-old Michael in the head while he stood between his father’s legs. They were more than 40 feet away from the fireworks when the tragedy occurred.

Better Places to Spend the 4th than the Emergency Room

Dr. Colleen Ryan of the Sumner Redstone Burn Center at Mass. General Hospital said, "Fireworks can cause traumatic burns, eye injuries and amputations, which are particularly tragic when they occur to children because they are life-changing events." She added, "There are better places to spend the 4th of July than the emergency room."

Set a Good Example

Chief Kenneth Willette, President of the Fire Chiefs' Association of Massachusetts said, "Prevention of fireworks injuries starts when responsible adults set a good example and leave the fireworks to the professionals." He added, "Just as our children know where we keep the lighters and matches, they know where we keep the sparklers and firecrackers."

4th of July No Holiday for Firefighters

Insp. Joseph DiFranco, Vice-President of the Fire Prevention Association of Massachusetts said, "Traditionally, the Fourth of July has been one of the busiest days of the year for firefighters who, in many communities, provide both emergency medical services as well as fire suppression." He added, "The illegal use of fireworks by amateurs, bon fires, backyard barbecues gone haywire, lawnmowers refueled while the engine is still hot, and overheating cars mean that the Fourth of July is no holiday for firefighters."

Fireworks Are Illegal Except for Licensed Professionals

State Police Lt. Kevin McMahon, executive officer for the Fire and Explosion Investigation Section in the Office of the State Fire Marshal said, "The possession and use of all fireworks by private citizens is illegal in Massachusetts. This includes Class C fireworks, which are sometimes falsely called 'safe and sane.' Examples of these are sparklers, party poppers, snappers, firecrackers, and spinners." He noted that the teens involved firesetting and bomb making frequently use the contents of class C fireworks to build their explosive devices.

Illegal to Bring Fireworks into Massachusetts from Out-of-State

It is illegal to purchase fireworks in another state such as New Hampshire or Connecticut, and to then transport them into Massachusetts. Advertisers cannot be prohibited from advertising fireworks, but it is illegal to purchase fireworks through catalogues or over the Internet for delivery in this state. Many unhappy consumers have lost both their money and fireworks trying to circumvent the law. State Fire Marshal Coan said, "Play it safe and enjoy the many professional, supervised displays across the state this holiday week!"

Fireworks Caused Over \$1.6 Million in Losses in Past Decade

In the past decade (1997-2006) Massachusetts has experienced 615 major fire and explosion from fireworks causing two deaths, 15 civilian injuries, eight fire service injuries and nearly \$1.5 million in property loss — all in a state where consumer fireworks are illegal. A majority of these incidents took place during the week of the Fourth of July holiday. Over the same period, the state's burn registry has had 47 reports of victims with burns extending over 5% of their body surface area. Of these, 62% were people under age 18 and 25% were between 10 and 14 years old.

Demonstration of Danger

Just how lethal fireworks can be, was shown in a startling demonstration conducted by the State Police Hazardous Devices Unit assigned to the Office of the State Fire Marshal.

Fireworks, typical of those confiscated by law enforcement authorities, were attached to mannequins. The damage done was shocking as spectators were asked to imagine how much worse the damage would be to a child's body. Also shown, was how quickly a sparkler can ignite the sleeve of children's clothing, and the damage aerial fireworks such as bottle rockets can do when their flight path encounters a human face and eyes.